Course: 28833 Readings in 20th Century African American History  
Fall 2015  

Visiting Professor Khalil Gibran Muhammad  
kgibransr@gmail.com  

CUNY – Graduate Center  
Room 5383  

Class Meets: Tuesday, 6:30-8:30  
Office Hours: by appointment  

Course Description and Goals  

This course is primarily a readings course designed to introduce students to the major topics, themes, and problems in 20th Century African-American history. Our readings and discussions will explore the following: the rise and evolution of segregation in the South and North, migration, labor and unions, education, crime and punishment, housing, urban life and culture, health and disease, institution-building, intra-racial class and gender dynamics, civil rights, and black nationalism. Weekly assignments will consist of reading one monograph (most of which have been published recently) and occasionally an article.  

By familiarizing students with the literature and major historiographical debates since the end of Reconstruction, the goal of this course is for every student (1) to identify a research topic for a future seminar or thesis; (2) to help prepare students for qualifying exams; and (3) to facilitate and sharpen students’ abilities to engage critically and constructively with scholarship. Every student will be responsible for at least one presentation a monograph, a short book review, an encyclopedia article, plus an historiographical essay due at semester’s end. Class participation will be very important to student’s overall performance. Everyone, including the week’s presenter, is expected to have read the assignment and to be prepared to engage in discussion.  

Performance and Evaluation  

As future teachers and scholars it is absolutely essential that every student participate in every discussion, every week. Our weekly meetings are intended to explore, discuss, and debate the core arguments of the readings, the use of evidence, and the history itself. Graduate school often entails the frantic reading of numerous texts in an effort to familiarize oneself with the historiography. At times the history is neglected in lieu of the historiography. My expectation is that you will learn and demonstrate your grasp of the historiography when you write the book review and the final historiographical essay.  

Week to week, otherwise, you will read the assigned book for argument, use of evidence, and content, and be ready to discuss all three facets in class. The discussion facilitator bears the burden of being the most prepared on their assigned week, and will use their book review or encyclopedia article to facilitate a lively discussion, but others will be similarly expected and evaluated on their ability to contribute. Every week you must prepare comments and a questions on the argument, evidence/methodology, and the history found in each reading and also share your thoughts. Initially I will not collect these, but if I find that self-motivation is lacking and participation wanes, I will ask for these ahead of time and call upon students to share what they have submitted.
Your performance will be based on the following:

25%  Class Participation
Builds your critical speaking skills and your ability to respond intelligently in an improvisational context; this is also the best opportunity for exploring aspects of a book that you missed, really enjoyed, or did not comprehend when you read by yourself. This will help you when you prepare for qualifying exams in the future.

12.5%  Book Review (5pp)  DUE IN CLASS DAY OF PRESENTATION
Builds your critical writing skills, and encourages deeper reading of the assignments; also prepares you for writing future book reviews. Please use the Journal of American History as a guide.

12.5%  Encyclopedia Article (3pp)  DUE IN CLASS DAY OF PRESENTATION
Sharpens your writing skills, forcing you to summarize complex ideas and issues into concise statements and crisp prose; it also puts you in the position of the author rather than the critic, making difficult choices about what really matters. Please consult any historical encyclopedia for examples.

50%  Final Historiographical/Literature Review Essay (15pp.)  DUE: 12/15
Further enhances your critical writing skills in a longer assignment, but more importantly gives you an opportunity to fully explore a subject area inspired by the readings that might lead you to a research project (a conference paper, published article, or dissertation chapter).

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (9/1)  Introduction/ Presentation Schedule

Week 2 (9/8)  The Meaning of the Past
Ta Ne-hisi Coates, Between the World and Me


Week 3 (9/15)  NO CLASS

Week 4 Fri (9/25)  The Dawn of Freedom/Reconstruction
Leon Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery (1980).

Week 5 (9/29)  New South Punishment

Week 6 (10/6) **Racial Ideology**


Week 7 (10/13) **Great Migration: Gender, Culture and Society**

Week 8 (10/20) **The Renaissance Moment**

Week 9 (10/27) **Health and Environment**


Week 10 (11/3) **Leisure and Land**


Week 11 (11/10) **The Left and Labor**
Robin D. G. Kelley, Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression

Week 12 (11/17) **Urban North**


Week 13 (11/24) **Civil Rights, Black Power and Beyond**


Week 14 (12/1) **Internationalization, Decolonization and Post Civil Rights Politics**


TBD

Week 15 (12/8) **Carceral State**

